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From Sir Daniel Cooper

THE

J. P. Campbell

CONDITION AND RESOURCES

OF

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NEW SOUTH WALES.

BY

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THE CONDITION AND RESOURCES

OF

NEW SOUTH WALES.

The following paper on the resources of New South Wales was read by CHRISTOPHER ROLLESTON, Esq., Auditor General and formerly Registrar General of the Colony, before the Royal Society of New South Wales, on Wednesday, 12th December, 1866.

CONDITION AND RESOURCES OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

At a time when we are suffering from a depression which has paralyzed trade and destroyed confidence, it may not be inopportune to review our position, and to endeavour, by means of ascertained facts, to reassure ourselves as to the solidity of our resources.

We are enabled to do this by means of the data supplied in the Statistical Register for the year 1865, lately presented to Parliament. I think, if we carefully look at the results which that volume places before us, we shall find reason to acknowledge that the panic which has seized the community (let people attribute it to what cause they may) is not justified by the failure of any one of our main sources of wealth. I do not purpose to

trace this depression under which the colony is labouring to its primary causes. I am satisfied to fall in with the general opinion that we *are* suffering from the effect of previous overtrading and extravagance. This is no new thing. Young and vigorous communities like ours are peculiarly liable to fluctuations of this kind. Depression follows excitement as naturally in the body social as in the body physical, and I know of nothing in the climate or constitution of New South Wales which should exempt us from this law. A bank director told me the other day, that very few persons were sensible of the imminence of the crisis through which we had passed, aggravated as it was by the unexpected demands for assistance by our own Government, as well as that of Queensland. Luckily we have tided over the crisis in happy ignorance of the danger, feeling its effects only in a little temporary depression. But what we call "depression,"—how does it manifest itself? It seems to me that if the same state of things of which we are complaining were to exist in the older countries of Europe, it would be to them a season of comparative wealth and prosperity. Tell me what class is there amongst us which cannot command more of the comforts—aye, and luxuries too—of life than the denizens of most other countries enjoy. I ask you to go with me on any public holiday to the haunts of pleasure-seekers in and about our beautiful harbour—to

Manly Beach or Watson's Bay, or to see a cricket match in the Domain, or at the Albert Cricket Ground, or where else you will—and will you see evidences of this “depression” there? We have no statistics to demonstrate the existence of any depression in this direction, and our ordinary senses fail to discover it. Take a walk with me down George Street, and look at the display of fashion in the fashionable shop windows, and notice the private equipages, more or less handsome, drawn up in files at the doors, with gorgeously appareled ladies stepping into or stepping out of them, and with trains that caution one to stand off and keep clear. I ask whether there is “any evidence of depression here!” On the contrary, my observation leads me to believe—and I am sorry again that I am unable to reduce my belief to a matter of certainty by the light of those vulgar things called statistics—that private equipages, from the fashionable barouche to the American buggy, have multiplied exceedingly in our metropolis within the last three or four years; and, moreover, in articles of dress and millinery display, and particularly in the grotesque designs and elaborate variety of that important female appendage miscalled a bonnet, I think it will be allowed that our fashionable shops exceed, this season, anything that has been known before.

I don't know that there has been any noticeable

diminution in the number of private balls or dinner parties, nor in any of our public entertainments during the past season ; on the contrary, I believe that the Opera was never better patronised, and performers of any merit seem to have enjoyed a fair share of public support. Suspicious looking hampers seem to be very prevalent at the present time, apparently filled with the choicest viands, *en route* for the various picnic grounds which at this season invite the almost daily enjoyment of our citizens ; indeed, so numerous are they, that pedestrians like myself are in some danger of being knocked down by them in passing the doors of the principal grocers in town every Saturday morning. Look, again, at the number of houses of entertainment in the city—why, every twentieth house is one. It was so many years ago, and I hardly think any one will venture to say that they have decreased. And the number of photographic galleries ! How are all these supported ? How many thousands must weekly visit the photographers to afford support to so many ? Look, again, at your churches and chapels and cathedrals. Never has so great an activity and earnestness been evinced by all denominations in the erection and enlargement of places of public worship as has marked the course of the last two or three years. Nor have they been wanting in evidences of philanthropy and enlarged benevolence. Look at our contributions to the Lancashire

Relief Fund, to the erection of that beautiful statue of the late Prince Consort, and, later still, to the unfortunate sufferers by the late severe wrecks on our coast, and to the many other almost daily objects of local charity, and tell me, do these bear any evidence of depression? If they do, it is an evidence that does the highest credit to the good feeling of the people of this colony—an evidence that their charities and public subscriptions are not restricted by fortuitous circumstances, nor circumscribed by straitened means, but are regulated upon the principle of a large-hearted benevolence, which, demanding the exercise of no small amount of self-abnegation, can proceed from no other motives than those of the warmest philanthropy.

But I am told that property is being sold for a third of its value; that mortgagees are foreclosing in all directions, to the utter ruin of the unfortunate mortgagors. Well, it may be so, and it has been so from time immemorial; and it will be so again. Individuals suffer, but the community at large is benefited. But let me ask how this value is to be arrived at. This is an important consideration in working out this question.

Who does not recollect the extravagant competition for land, at the Government sales, some eight or ten years ago; and that still more extravagant demand made, aye, and obtained, too, by private speculators. Why, no one was satisfied unless he had a suburban residence, and enjoyed

the shade of his own vine and his own fig-tree. And at what cost was this taste satisfied?

Who does not remember that in those days skilled labour commanded from fifteen shillings to a guinea a day, and that the price of materials, of all kinds, wherewith to build up one of these palatial villas was enormously enhanced by the artificial plethora of the gold-times! And yet, forsooth, we are to be astonished when one of these places is forced into the market—that it does not realise more than one-half or one-third of its cost. Surely, a little reflection should satisfy us, that the hard-earned savings of the honest industry of these sober days, are not to be saddled with the cost of the prolific extravagance of years gone by; and that we are not to conclude that the country is going to ruin because Mr. Jones's very handsome residence, erected at a cost of £10,000 eight or ten years ago, passes into Mr. Brown's or Mr. Robinson's hands for one half of that sum. Mr. Brown or Mr. Robinson gets the advantage of the lavish expenditure of Mr. Jones. That's all. The community at large is not impoverished. I say then that let people account for this so-called depression in what way they will, you won't find evidences of it in the shops and warehouses which line your streets, nor in the palatial residences of your suburbs, nor in the equipages in which your wealthy citizens are wont to take their airing, nor yet in the public or private amusements got up for the recreation of the general class of citizens.

But let us descend from the region of hypothesis to plain facts and figures. I will ask you to go back with me at present no further than the year 1860, because we then start fair with New South Wales in geographical limits, as it exists at the present time. If I were to go further back, I should involve you in perplexity, and expose my figures to doubts and questions as to the effect which the separation and erection of the northern districts into a separate colony ought to have upon them, and I have no wish to enter upon the domain of the Queensland statistician. It is enough for our purpose to know that at the end of the year 1859, New South Wales was deprived of the larger portion of her territory, and with it of some 23,000 of her inhabitants, some two and a half to three millions of sheep, besides cattle and horses, and that on the 1st December of that year, from these comparatively small beginnings, there has risen up on our Northern frontier a vigorous and thriving community—supported, it is true, in great part, by Sydney capital, and going ahead, as young people are apt to do, a little too fast—which challenges comparison in its progress and development with that of any of the colonies forming the Australian group. We will take, therefore, a review of the last six years (1860 to 1865 both inclusive), and endeavour to arrive at some approximate idea as to the progress we have made during that period.

1. POPULATION.

On the 1st of January, 1860, then we start with a population of 336,572* souls; and on the 31st December, 1865, (six years afterwards), the Returns give us an estimated population, made up by an increase of births over deaths, and immigration over emigration, of 411,388, showing an increase of 74,816, or 22 per cent.

In 1860 our vital Statistics showed an accession to the population by births of 14,233. In 1865 the births amounted to 17,283, which exhibits an increased power of reproduction within ourselves of over 21 per cent. Of the total increase of 74,816 to the population since the separation of Queensland, 56,068, or 75 per cent., is to be set down to the natural increase by the excess of births over deaths. On reference to the report of the Immigration Agent for 1865, I find that he puts down the excess of arrivals over departures from and to Great Britain at 19,829 in the six years, that is at the rate of 3305 per annum. This information will be agreeable to those who favour the doctrine of Australia for the Australians, since it shows to them that one-fourth only of the addition to our numbers has been made up from what they call foreign sources. It has been maintained, however, by the Registrar-General of Victoria, and our own statistics would seem to bear

* Estimated population on 31st December, 1859.

out his conclusion, that wages and immigration have declined pretty much in the same ratio. Wages have never been so high in either colony as in those years when the tide of immigration set in most strongly. But this is a question upon which I am not here going to enter, as it would lead me very wide of the object of this paper.

Although our progress in population has not kept pace with that of our enterprising young offshoot in the north, nor yet with our older offshoot in the south, we should not forget that we occupy a country, much of it of the richest quality, which embraces over five hundred acres of land for every man, woman, and child in it, and which, without exceeding the density of the population as it now exists in the county of Cumberland, exclusive of Sydney, will admit of a population exceeding fifteen millions of souls, or nearly forty times the number of its present inhabitants. When we reflect on this fact, and consider the enormous field which is thus offered for the extension of the industry and enterprise of the colonists, we cannot but regard our present difficulties as the result of a plethora of credit rather than of a diminution of wealth, as having little or no serious effect upon the general prosperity, and as being of a very evanescent character. I will now pass on to a review of our resources under the next head of inquiry, namely,

2. PRODUCTION.

Under this head I will take, first, the pastoral interest, and endeavour to show how great has been our progress in this branch of industry. Sheep, of course, is the mainstay of the pastoral interest, and it appears that after the separation of Queensland, with its two millions and a half of sheep, we were left with a stock of 5,162,671 sheep on the 31st March, 1860, this being the date upon which the returns for the year are made up. Well, what accumulation have we to show as the result of our six years' breeding? Well-founded doubts having arisen as to the accuracy of the figures in the statistical tables of the Registrar-General, I take my figures from the returns made by the sheep proprietors to the clerks of Petty Sessions, and verified by solemn declaration under the Scab in Sheep Act (27 Vic. No. 6). I find, then, from these returns that we had on the 1st January, exclusive of small lots under five hundred, in the hands of butchers and others, no less than 11,100,245, that is to say, an increase in the six years of 5,937,574 sheep, equal to 115 per cent.

The declared returns of the previous year show that we had 10,075,468 sheep. We may therefore fairly assume that we are increasing our sheep at the rate of over a million annually, and our staple produce to the extent of not far short of three millions pounds of wool, which, at eighteen pence per pound, is equal to a sum of £225,000.

When we consider the boundless area in the far interior still unsubdued and unoccupied—when we reflect upon what has already been done by the enterprise of the sheep-holders in the expenditure of capital to bring large tracts of unwatered country into use by means of wells and dams; and, further, the large addition to the carrying capabilities of the country, by fencing and other improvements, I am not exaggerating in estimating the doubling of our present stock within the next six years as a not improbable prospect.

Our export of wool last year, seaward and *via* the Darling for Adelaide, and across the Murray for Melbourne, was as follows, viz. :—

	Lbs.
Seaward	25,961,468
Less imports from Queensland and elsewhere	7,208,501
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Leaving	18,772,960

To this add quantity sent *via* Darling River and across the Murray, viz.,

	Lbs.
Albury	403,765
Corowa	879,017
Moama	6,907,661
Swan Hill	1,385,916
Euston	156,800
Wentworth	1,555,600
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	11,288,752
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Making a total of	30,061,719
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Assuming this quantity of wool to represent the

clip of 1865, it gives a yield of very nearly three pounds per sheep, and averaging the quantity at the rate of one shilling and sixpence per pound (which I am advised is not an excessive average), we arrive at the value of £2,254,628.

It is a point worth noticing in connection with our export of wool, that over 37 per cent of the clip was shipped last year at the ports of Melbourne and Adelaide. Certainly a very large proportion, and suggestive of careful consideration as to the means to be adopted to intercept this traffic, and bring it down to our own ports; for it must be recollected that it is not only the loss connected with the export of this produce which we suffer, but the loss upon the importation, agency, and other business connected with the return supplies to the stations.

I have not the means of testing the accuracy of the returns of horses and cattle, and must therefore accept the figures as stated in the statistical tables. And here it is only fair to the Registrar-General to state that he is dependent on the police for the collection of his annual returns of agriculture and live-stock, and that he cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, over the collection of which he has no control whatever. If the returns are accurate they show a diminution in the number of cattle in the colony. We started in 1860 with 2,190,976, and we find ourselves in 1866 with only 1,961,905. I cannot say that the

returns are inaccurate, but since the sheep returns appear to be under stated to the extent of something like 27 per cent, it is not unreasonable to assume that the cattle have been short reckoned in pretty much the same ratio, and that our numbers ought to have exceeded two millions and a half at the time the returns were taken. The decrease, if it really exists, can only be assigned to the effect of the pleuro-pneumonia and the last two years' drought combined. Great losses from both causes have been suffered, but, looking to large natural increase, it can hardly be to the extent which these figures would indicate. But, be this as it may, we possessed at the end of last year five (5) head of horned cattle, more or less, and 27 sheep, for every man, woman, and child in the colony--or for every 100 of the population 500 cattle and 2700 sheep.

The agricultural statistics for Ireland for the 1861 showed only 61 sheep, and 60 head of cattle, to every 100 of the population.

I dare say some of you may remember to have heard or read Sir William Denison's paper on the supply of meat, in which he endeavoured to show that, supposing the number of mouths went on increasing in the same ratio as it had done, these colonies were not producing beef and mutton enough to keep pace with the increasing population. This was in 1858, and the figures he quoted were as follows, viz. :—

	Sheep.	Cattle.
New South Wales, including Queensland	8,139,162	2,148,664
Victoria	4,766,022	614,537
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Totals	12,905,184	2,763,201

If his Excellency were now here, he would find that the sheep had more than doubled, whilst the cattle had increased by 20 per cent, taking the returns as they stand, viz. :—

	Sheep.	Cattle.
New South Wales	11,100,245	1,961,905
Victoria	8,835,380	621,337
Queensland	6,594,966	848,346
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Totals	26,530,591	3,431,588

It is quite clear, from these figures, that the colony of Victoria cannot supply herself with beef, since her herds are nearly the same now as they were eight years ago, and we know that she has been drawing annually large supplies of fat cattle from this colony. And there is a further fact connected with the breeding and export of cattle well deserving attention, which is this: that it is not alone Victoria, but Tasmania, New Zealand, and South Australia are making large demands upon our herds, whilst a market is being opened up in Batavia and elsewhere for our beef—not to mention the probable exhaustion of our herds, if my friend Mr. Tooth's process succeeds, by which it is said you will be able to put two or three bullocks at once into your waistcoat pocket. Think of that ye cattle breeders!

